United Nations A/53/348

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 September 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Item 73 of the provisional agenda*
Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Functioning of the Regional Centre	3	2
III.	Objective and activities of the Regional Centre	4–17	2
IV.	Staffing and finance	18–24	3

* A/53/150.

98-26395 (E) 240998

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/46 E of 10 December 1996 entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa", by which the Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on the activities of the Centre.

2. The report covers the period from July 1996 to June 1998.

II. Functioning of the Regional Centre

3. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established in 1986 in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985. The Centre functioned until 1992 under the auspices of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which acted as the focal point for coordinating inputs to the Centre's activities by pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system. The Centre then functioned under the Centre for Disarmament Affairs of the Department of Political Affairs until December 1997. Since January 1998, the Centre has been operating under the re-established Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Centre is located at Lomé.

III. Objective and activities of the Regional Centre

4. The Centre continued to carry out its mandate as contained in General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. According to that resolution, "the Centre shall provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, as well as coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa under the World Disarmament Campaign" (renamed the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme in 1992).

5. During the reporting period, the Centre, despite severe financial constraints, continued to fulfil its mandate insofar as possible by contributing to efforts to promote wider understanding and cooperation among African States in the areas of peace, disarmament and security. The Centre also expanded its contacts and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and other United Nations bodies so as to further the objectives of the Centre.

6. The Centre continued to publish and distribute its quarterly bilingual publication, the *African Peace Bulletin/Bulletin africain de la paix*, which focuses on relevant developments in the field of peace, security and disarmament and related issues, mainly on the African continent.

7. In accordance with the aim of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme to inform, educate and generate public understanding and support for arms limitation and disarmament, the Centre has continued its informal meetings (brainstorming sessions) at its premises once a month with persons interested in disarmament, peace and security and development-related issues in Africa, in particular students, associations and non-governmental institutions.

8. The Centre provided institutional and substantive support to some United Nations missions in Togo, in particular to the representative of the United Nations Secretary-General at the fourth Extraordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held at Lomé on 16 and 17 December 1997.

9. From 9 to 17 September 1996, the Centre provided substantive and organizational support to a peace operations training seminar for Central African States, held at Yaounde. The seminar was organized by the United Nations, in collaboration with the International Peace Academy.

10. On 27 and 28 January 1997, the Officer-in-Charge of the Centre, at the invitation of the host Government, participated in a national seminar on the Lomé Convention and future African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)-European Union (EU) perspectives and partnership, entitled "Democracy, State of Law, Conflicts Prevention and Management, and Development", organized at Lomé by the Government of Togo.

11. In response to an invitation extended to the Centre, the Officer-in-Charge attended the first Accord de non-agression et d'assistance en matières de défense (ANAD) and ECOWAS Experts Meeting on Cross-Border Crime, held at Yamoussoukro from 17 to 20 March 1997, where he made a presentation on the proliferation of small arms in the African region. The Meeting was jointly organized by the National Security Council of Côte d'Ivoire and ANAD.

12. At the invitation of the Government of the Niger, the Officer-in-Charge of the Centre participated in a meeting of

Chiefs of Staff of ANAD member States, held at Niamey from 24 to 26 April 1997.

13. On 1 October 1997, the Centre organized at its headquarters a special brainstorming session on peace and disarmament issues with participants from 28 countries attending the Fourth Pan-African Conference on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Associations and Clubs, which was held at Lomé.

14. From 25 to 28 November 1997, the Officer-in-Charge of the Centre attended a retreat seminar entitled "Programme approach and the Special Initiative of the United Nations System for Africa", held at Bethania, Togo. The retreat was organized by the United Nations Resident Coordinator System for United Nations agencies operating in Togo.

15. The Centre has also continued to distribute information materials on disarmament and related issues, published by the Secretariat and other United Nations organizations.

16. Visitors to the Centre's headquarters were briefed on issues relating to peace and disarmament issues and received relevant information materials. Delegations composed of political, diplomatic, academic and other leading personalities visited the Centre during the reporting period.

17. The Centre's documentation/reference library continued to receive publications from within and outside the African region. It is visited regularly by students and researchers. In order to increase the number of library documents, the Centre continued to establish relationships based on the exchange of documents with some research and academic institutions.

IV. Staffing and finance

18. Because of the severe ongoing financial constraints, responsibility for the daily management of the Centre has been assumed by the Officer-in-Charge since the resignation of the Centre's last Director in July 1992, and it has continued to operate with a skeleton local staff at the General Service level.

19. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/46 E, paragraph 6, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has taken the necessary steps for the appointment of a Lomé-based Director for the Centre in order to revitalize its activities and programmes and to undertake fund-raising with a view to securing a viable financial basis for the continued functioning of the Centre.

20. In exploring alternative means of financing the Centre, a consultancy mission, put together jointly by the Department of Political Affairs and the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by UNDP, visited Togo, the headquarters of the Centre, and several other African countries in September and October 1997.

21. While the consultants' report showed an overwhelmingly strong support for reactivating the Centre, it also identified the lack of resources as the principal obstacle to the effective revitalization of the Centre. The report indicated that at least $150,000 as a transitional grant for 1998 was necessary to allow for the development of a five-year programme of work and the elaboration and launching of a long-term fund-raising strategy.

22. In this connection, it is encouraging that UNDP, taking into account the link between peace and development, is setting up, with the support of relevant departments in the Secretariat, a programme for coordination and assistance on security and development, which will be carried out under the auspices of the Lomé Centre and will provide the Centre with sufficient resources to elaborate and implement its programme of work.

23. During the two-year period from July 1996 to June 1998, voluntary contributions in the amount of $18,000 have been received. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Norway and Togo for their contributions and to the Government of Togo for its support of the Centre.

24. Owing to the ongoing critical financial situation of the Lomé Centre, the Secretary-General strongly supports and reiterates the appeals made by the General Assembly to Member States, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals to provide voluntary contributions.